

VZCZCXRO3875
PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHAB #0544/01 1431153
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 231153Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3003
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 0096
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABIDJAN 000544

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/20/2017
TAGS: [KPKO](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UN](#) [IV](#)
SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: REASSESSING THE UNOCI MISSION
REF: ABIDJAN 521

Classified By: PolOff Laura Taylor-Kale, Reasons 1.4 (b & d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The evolving political and security climate in Cote d'Ivoire in light of the Ouagadougou Political Accord (OPA) and the increasing demands on the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) mission pose the question: what should UNOCI's role be in this fragile security environment? Although the government is falling behind the OPA timetable, the political process is moving quickly and the government will need UNOCI to help maintain security, particularly in the troubled western region of the country, during the concurrent identification, voter registration and DDR processes in addition to technical, logistical and elections support. Licorne's drawdown to possibly half of its original force levels creates an added burden on UNOCI to backfill for the loss. As the High Representative for Elections (HRE) closes his shop and the future of the International Working Group (IWG) is uncertain, UNOCI will be the sole vehicle through which the international community can engage on elections planning and identification. Given the increasing demands on UNOCI, the reduced Licorne presence and the fragile security climate, Post does not recommend a reduction of the UNOCI mission and does not think an increase is necessary at this time. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) The evolving political and security climate in Cote d'Ivoire in light of the OPA and the increasing demands on the UNOCI peacekeeping mission pose the question: what should UNOCI's role be given the ambitious steps required by the OPA in this more stable, but still fragile security atmosphere? The Secretary General's 13th Progress Report on UNOCI, the basis for the May 18 UNSC discussion and subsequent PRST, poses the same question. PM Soro's new government is only now solidifying as new ministers assume their posts and fill key offices and has just begun to implement core provisions of the OPA (disarmament of militias and military units, military restructuring and integration, audiences foraines (public identification hearings) and elections planning). Although the government is intent on holding elections by the end of 2008, the 10 months timeframe is clearly unrealistic and Soro has acknowledged that his administration is already behind schedule according to the timetable laid out in the OPA (reftel).

¶3. (C) The government has asked for and needs UNOCI's logistical and technical support in redeploying its civil administration, crucial for the relaunch of the audiences foraines and voter registration. The government is also asking for tens of millions of dollars to support these projects, although advisors close to Soro recognize the international community will be reluctant to foot the bill as drawn up and is making efforts to reduce the request. Furthermore, with the possible elimination of the IWG, UNOCI will be the sole vehicle through which the international community can engage on elections planning and

identification. Th recent compromise between Gbagbo and Soro on the participation of UNOCI in the elections process as already diminished UNOCI's role (reftel). As te HRE office closes shop in the coming weeks, th increased political demands on UNOCI to providetechnical assistance will bring greater pressure on its resources. At the same time, the direct influence of most of the international community (erhaps outside of Burkina President Compaore and the indirect role of international financial assistance) is beginning to wane.

¶4. (C) In addition to technical assistance and monitoring, UNOCI will play an important role in maintaining security of identification, voter registration, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs and, eventually, elections. The government recognizes it needs UNOCI's military and police presence and active engagement in each of these initiatives that are key to the process of national reconciliation and peace building. UNOCI security assistance will be particularly important in troubled areas of the West where militias are still active (despite the May 20 public "dismantling" of the Resistance Forces of the Great West, where some 1,000 mainly older weapons in apparently poor condition were rendered). The current security climate is stable overall but the continued violence in the West, the drawdown of Licorne troops and the additional responsibilities that UNOCI has been asked to take add further pressure to the UNOCI mission.

¶5. (C) Licorne's drawdown in particular has serious implications for UNOCI since Licorne plays an important role in backing UNOCI's peacekeeping presence. Licorne's troops are more effective and have better logistical and aviation support than UNOCI peacekeepers. Currently, Licorne has

ABIDJAN 00000544 002 OF 002

approximately 3,000 troops, three-fourths of original force levels. Licorne General Lecerf intends to reduce the French footprint in the coming months and may draw down to 2,000 troops by September. While Licorne can still cover the entire country with their two remaining battalions, there will be inevitably less support for UNOCI.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: Even if UNOCI's role is not expanded, its military, police and political responsibilities will grow. Given the fragile security climate and these increasing demands, Post does not think an increase is necessary but neither do we recommend a reduction of UNOCI force levels at this time. Indeed, PM Soro and his inner circle have told us in no uncertain terms that a reduction in UNOCI force levels at this time would be "catastrophic."

¶7. (C) No one can predict precisely how many troops will be needed to complete the difficult tasks ahead. UNOCI assets can and should be strategically redeployed to fit the evolving mission profile, perhaps deploying its six battalions to more effectively cover the volatile West and populous Abidjan neighborhoods in recognition that the security situation in the East is comparatively stable; the UNSYG's report calls precisely for such a redeployment. However, it would be unwise to assume at this juncture that a reduction of the UNOCI mission will serve the needs of the peace process to which the USG, the Ivoirian people and the international community have invested so heavily. This is particularly true given that once troop numbers are reduced, it would take months to ratchet those levels back up, should they be required. The UNSYG has pledged in his report to reexamine the question of troop levels in the September report. We concur that this would be an opportune time to revisit this question.

¶8. (C) UNOCI's operations are far from perfect and can be improved. Internal financial controls are weak, coordination of efforts among the various UN organizations here (UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, etc.) is underwhelming. UNOCI's engagement with the public is lacking. Each of these problems is

well-known to the UN's senior leadership here, as well as the whole of the international community and the Ivoirian political class, and should be addressed. The UNSC can demand that UNOCI implement management and programmatic improvements urgently, prior to the September review. END
COMMENT
HOOKS